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Robert Frost and Maya Angelou: Poet-as-Rhetor in the Presidential Inauguration: Textual Symbols and the Symbol of Enactment

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Robert Frost and Maya Angelou;

Poet-as-Rhetor in the Presidential Inauguration:

Textual Symbols and the Symbol of Enactment

(TITLE)

BY

Donna M. Witmer

THESIS

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Robert Frost and Maya Angelou;
Poet--as--Rhetor in the Presidential Inauguration:
Textual Symbols and the Symbol of Enactment

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Running Head: FROST AND ANGELOU

Dedication

To my husband and our children

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Abstract

This criticism uses an organic approach to examine the rhetorical properties of Frost's and Angelou's inaugural poems and their individual enactments respective of the constraints and exigencies in the Presidential inaugurations of Kennedy and Clinton. Apparently responding to the constraints of television's sound bite as well as to exigencies of the traditional inauguration and the need to serve a new generation and a culturally diverse population, the Clinton Administration combined the poetic form, used to heighten an emotional response, with an enactment as a synecdochic symbol, used to assert sociopolitical ideology.

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CHAPTER ONE

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY, METHODOLOGY, AND ORGANIZATION

Nature of the Study

The inauguration of an American President is marked by rhetoric intended to unify the American people, laud the renewal of the American political system, and set the tone for the Administration's ensuing term. Only two occasions of this highly visible, American tradition have been distinguished by the performance of poetry during the inaugural ceremony. In both cases, the poet was invited by the President-elect to join him on the platform and to address the public. On the first of these occasions, in 1961, Robert Frost was invited by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy; on the second, in 1993, Maya Angelou was invited by William Jefferson Clinton. If the exception appears to alter the traditional practice limited to prose and the significant roles of the President and clergy, the critic of rhetoric is prone to discover the reasons for the innovation of the respective acts and to apply criteria to evaluate each act in terms of aesthetics, ethics, truth and effects. From further analysis of similarities and differences, the critic may judge the appropriateness of the responses in the rhetorical context of the inauguration.

Rationale and Purpose for the Study

Both President Kennedy and President Clinton represented the Democratic party. Both were Presidents-elect. However, they were

separated by more than thirty years of history. Still, Clinton admired Kennedy for his sociopolitical ideology. Perhaps Clinton's imitation of the first occasion for poetic expression arises from that admiration. On the other hand, the repetition of the circumstances which stood a nationally acclaimed poet alongside an American President on his inauguration may suggest more political strategy than mere admiration. If the role of the poet in the inauguration may be defined as politically rhetorical, then the significance of Clinton's imitation exceeds its value beyond that of happenstance.

The significance of this analysis is defined in part by evidence which shows that the inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton is believed to be the most symbolic of all the inaugural theaters (CBS News, 1993b) and modeled after that of John Fitzgerald Kennedy ("Profile: Caged bird," 1993, p. 98; "Two speeches," 1993, p. 4). Although a criticism of relationships may proceed inductively from analyses of recurring forms and the notation of similarities, respected theorists and critics warn against the temptation to define a genre from two examples (Simons, 1976, p. 48). Therefore, the purpose of this criticism is not to argue for a new poetic genre or a new inaugural genre but to illuminate factors contributing to similar rhetorical responses. For students and critics of rhetoric, understanding the nature and employment of the symbols in the two poetic acts at these inaugurations may provide insights into the dynamic properties of symbols and into the exigencies and constraints which prompt the recurrence of rhetorical forms.

Premises and Anticipated Findings

The research for this study began with the following premises:
(1) Inasmuch as Kennedy and Clinton, themselves, addressed the nation from the traditional stance of the inaugural speech, factors unique to their inaugural situations warranted the participation of poets;
(2) by virtue of the established ethos of Robert Frost, President Kennedy's inclusion of the poet in the inauguration symbolically enhanced the posture of the new Administration; and
(3) by virtue of the established ethos of Maya Angelou and the antecedent act of Kennedy, President Clinton's inclusion of the poet in the inauguration enacted a sociopolitical ideology.

Analyses were expected to produce two conclusions:
(1) Poets as rhetors may function as extensions of their verses and of personal political ideologies, thereby as symbols themselves, in the rhetorical context of a Presidential inauguration; and
(2) the nature of the electronic visual media contributes an exigency in the rhetorical situation of the Presidential inauguration which may be met by employing a poet who enacts the ideology of the President-elect and/or the myths associated with the inaugural occasion.

Methodology

The inaugural occasions of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and President William Jefferson Clinton were examined through critical analyses and historical research. The approach, in part, subscribes to

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's organic or situational approach to criticism (Campbell, 1972, p. 13) and was applied separately to each occasion. The approach is "concerned with the specific goals of particular persuaders in specific contexts; it views rhetorical acts as patterns of argument and interaction that grow out of particular conditions" (Campbell, p. 14). First, preceding from a descriptive analysis of the text, inclusive of an analysis of purpose, audience, persona, tone, structure, supporting materials, and strategies (Campbell, 1982, pp. 14-23), the critic identified stylistic and substantive elements of the text. Second, the critic examined the historical and rhetorical contexts of the act, including the rhetor's background, the political posture of the President-elect, and the rhetorical exigencies of the situation. Third, the critic interpreted the nature of the act in the context of the rhetorical situation. Finally, a synthesis of the three stages of analysis with an emphasis on the interplay of stylistic and substantive elements of text and enactment produced an integrated analysis. Respective of two rhetorical acts, two analyses were generated. Each constitutes one chapter in this study.

Operationalized definitions of the terms **enactment** and **synecdoche**, appearing pertinent to the recurrence of the rhetorical act, were taken from criticisms examining enactment as a recurrent rhetorical form and synecdoche as a metaphoric form. **Enactment** was defined as "a reflexive. . .in which the speaker incarnates the argument, [i.e. the speaker] is the proof of the truth of what is said" (Campbell and Jamieson,1978, p. 9). **Synecdoche** was defined as follows (Jamieson, 1988):

> a part that stands for the whole from which [it is] drawn. . . . Synecdochic phrases serve useful rhetorical and social functions. By specifying grounds to which [a] community assents and by stipulating patterns of language whose use speaks the communal bond, they create a rhetorical community. Through synecdochic phrases, a community absorbs and transmits its interpretation of its own history (pp. 91-92).

Both definitions facilitated comparisons and contrasts.

Following analysis of each of the two rhetorical acts, the critic compared and contrasted the nature of the rhetorical acts attendant to the President's inaugural address and within the rhetorical situation defined as a Presidential inauguration. Then, the critic evaluated the interplay of the role of the poet--as--rhetor, the function of the poetry, and the nature of the poetic act in the rhetorical context of President Clinton's inauguration. Conclusions were drawn about the appropriateness of the response to the rhetorical situation. Chapter Four reports these evaluations and conclusions.

Organization of the Study

Chapter One has defined the purpose and nature of the study, provided a justification for the study in the field of speech communication, described Campbell's organic approach to criticism which directed the analyses in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, and explained the procedure subsequent to the analyses of the rhetorical acts.

Chapter Two examines "The Gift Outright" (see Appendix A), the text of

Robert Frost's inaugural presentation, and assesses the role of the poet as rhetor. Explication of the poem shows that despite Frost's indication that the poem was a statement about "pursuit of nationality--as simple as could be," the images within the text force association about commitment and separatism that extend into highly personal realms of experience. Beyond this appeal, Frost, himself, becomes a symbol of endorsement for President-elect Kennedy. As the analysis also shows, Kennedy's invitation to Frost to read the poem as part of the inaugural ceremony endorsed Frost's philosophy as well, making Frost's appearance function rhetorically as enactment of ideology.

Chapter Three examines the text of "On the Pulse of Morning" (see Appendix B) and the role of the poet Maya Angelou for rhetorical properties. The text appears to make a primary appeal to diverse subcultures in the American population to transcend their minority status by means of courage and faith in God. The poem exceeds the limitations of the primary appeal by implying that the goal of the minority population is no less than a "true yearning," an inalienable right that the American system has guaranteed. Through association with Kennedy and Frost, Clinton suggests a commitment to a new generation. His invitation to Angelou to speak at the inauguration serves again as an endorsement of her image, and her performance serves as an enactment.

Chapter Four compares and contrasts the rhetorical acts of Frost and Angelou, seeking to illuminate the appropriateness of the poetic text and the enactment in the inaugural situation. Conclusions recognize Angelou's text and participation as a response similar to Frost's with regard to the exigencies of the traditional inauguration yet distinguished by exigencies unique to the

Clinton Administration. Furthermore, the enactment appears as a fitting response to the constraints of the television sound bite. Rhetorically, for a contemporary audience, nondiscursive symbols of the response may prove as substantial as, if not more substantial than, discursive symbols; and the interplay of discursive and nondiscursive elements may significantly enhance or limit the drama of the occasion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RHETORIC OF ROBERT FROST AS AN INAUGURAL POET

Written in 1939, "The Gift Outright" (see Appendix A) was first presented publicly by Frost in a lecture-forum for Phi Beta Kappa Society at William and Mary College, on December 5, 1941. The work which would become "Frost's best-known patriotic poem" (Marcus, 1991, p.175) served not only to whet the appetite for the three-time Pulitzer Prize winner's forthcoming publication The Witness Tree, but more importantly to be considered here, it lauded symbols of America and articulated the relationship of those symbols. To America as a world leader, facing another "war to end all wars," the poem championed our spirit and called for an outright commitment of the spirit to the cause of freedom. The presentation was unquestionably timely. Yet Frost was not seeking to write propagandist verse as other writers were doing in the cause of the war, for as he, himself, remarked, "I am no Lawrence of Arabia" (Gerber, 1982, p. 82). To Frost, who selected the poem for the occasion of the William and Mary College lecture and who set the poem in the second section of The Witness Tree--the section which presented "either humans joined together in one society or one individual standing in opposition to society" (Marcus, p.175), the work was a philosophical statement of broader application.

Though he first presented the poem as a literary piece, the poet chose to recite the work publicly during several occasions of lecture-forums and to deliver it under unprecedented circumstances at the inauguration of an American President. Judging from the perspective of its poet-reader, the poem seemed appropriate oral communication, as well as written communication, and

appropriate to public audition, as well as to personal reflection. The implications of this endorsement by its creator and the unprecedented performance at the Presidential inauguration invite the critic to examine the rhetorical significance of the work. Such an examination warrants (a) an explication of the poem, (b) a review of the poet's philosophy, (c) an analysis of the poet as a symbol, (d) a interpretation of the interplay of elements in the rhetorical situation, and (e) a final assessment of the rhetorical act.

Explication of the Poem

The appeal of "The Gift Outright" begins in the first of the poem's sixteen lines: The land was ours before we were the land's. A paradox is evident; a question of belonging engages the imagination. The persona, too, is engaging. By employing the rhetorical "we," Frost implies a mutual compact between the narrator and the audience; and by employing vernacular language and the iambic meter, the sound of Frost's poetry approximates conversation. When the condition of the opening line is repeated in the second line--"She was our land," the relationship between the land and the people is emphasized. Furthermore, personal involvement is intensified because 'the land" has been transformed to the personal pronoun <u>she</u>. Then allusions to well-known historical events "in Massachusetts" and "in Virginia" that occurred "more than a hundred years" before we declared independence contribute a sense of physical reality. The commonality of heritage confronts the audience. The audience recalls the condition: an American was not truly an American. As colonists, "we were England's still" (l.5). At this point, the audience acknowledges that such was our state: we existed without a distinctly American identity.

Then lines 6 and 7 confront the audience with the cause of the dilemma. The land, personified, had not taken possession of our spirits; we were still "unpossessed" (l. 6). As colonists, we existed as possessions of England though the spirit of that state we "no more possessed" (l. 7). Like the first of the bipartite divisions of an Italian sonnet, the first seven lines of "The Gift Outright" have defined the circumstance--albeit, the problem. The audience anticipates a resolution.

Accordingly, the realization of the vision--the resolution of the problem--follows in the second division of the poem. The verbs impart the secret. Subliminally, the inactive state of being becomes a state of action as a new identity is realized. Main verbs shift from <u>was</u> and <u>were</u>, repeated in the first three statements (l. 1-5), to compound action verbs <u>made</u> and <u>found</u> in the fourth statement (ll. 8-11), and to the main verb <u>gave</u> in the fifth statement (l. 12). The introduction of "possession" in the third statement (ll. 7-8) arouses spiritual images, but the powers of these spirits, one more eminent than the other, are subliminal--as the grammatical structure suggests. The transition from a mere state of existence occurs only when the "Something we were withholding" (l. 8) is realized. When the "we" of the poem sees that it is "ourselves" (l. 9) that are withheld from "the land of living" (l. 10), the audience also shares the realization. Saying that "we" must "surrender" (l. 11) our spirits invites the audience to realize the universality of the symbols. Therefore, as the "we" commits the spirit and "[finds] salvation" (l. 11), the audience, too, reflects the power of spiritual commitment. Then, as the audience recalls that "we gave ourselves outright" (l. 12) and "(The deed of gift was many deeds of war)" (l. 13), the audience senses the transcendency which the early colonists experienced.

Commitment is seen as life-giving. Even "vaguely realizing" the direction in which commitment leads promises the colonist--and the audience--more of life than what was.

However, a promise has no truth value and existence is not the same as "living," so the conclusion ("Such as she was, such as she would become," l. 16) reminds the audience that what "was" and what "would be" are mere states of being. Moreover, one state of being is distinguishable from another by distinguishing the voice of one verb from the voice of another. Grammatically, the first verb acknowledges a state in the Past Order. The second verb because its voice is subjunctive, expresses a future condition which is speculative or wishful--even contrary-to-fact or highly unlikely (McMahan & Day, 1980). In other terms, the conversational voice of the rhetor utters a commissive statement and the audience is expected to respond to the promise or the threat. Consequently, the implication of the last line challenges the audience to act "still"--if "living" is to be realized.

Frost maintained that "The Gift Outright" was a simple statement--"pursuit of nationality--as simple as could be" (Cook, 1974, p. 80). Indeed, "The Gift Outright" tells how the colonists came to love the land, to realize a new identity, and to give birth to a new nation, yet "the statements themselves are made largely in terms of an implicit and quite possibly unconscious metaphor that equates transition from colonial status to national status with a complex psychic experience" (Nitchie, 1960, p.65), an experience common to humans everywhere. Thus, the "image-statements" permit the expression of "highly complex states of feeling, avoiding the oversimplification likely to accompany prudential moralizing" (Nitchie, p. 66).

Skillfully, Frost uses the metaphor to force personal association and, in turn, to force thinking: Thought is association--more or less metaphor. . . .Being reminded of something you hardly knew you knew--by something that's in front of you, something that's happening to you, or the past emerging out of the very levels of your knowledge (Cook, 1974, p. 206). From thought about the early colonist, the pursuit, the surrender, and the salvation, emerges other thought -- associations about commitment and separatism. The audience comes to understand the implications that exceed the statements. The experience of the poem is translated from a familiar, historically documented experience to a highly personalized sense of experience.

At first, the relationship between the land and the colonists appears to be merely physical, couched in language that is sexual. In the physical sense, the colonists separate themselves from Mother England (as the child separates from the parent) and establish a physical relationship with the land (as two lovers will). In language of the vernacular, Frost speaks of this new relationship as a sexual act: "[She] was ours"; "we were [hers]"; "She was ours. . .but we were ---'s"; "Possessing what we still were unpossessed by/ Possessed by what we now no more possessed"; "We were withholding from her." However, "something" transforms the relationship--"something we were withholding." That something is a realization of what "our land of living" needs: It was ourselves. The necessity of defining ourselves becomes the exigence which can define "living."

"The deed of gift" becomes the means to that end. It is not a contract, written on paper, merely entrusting, confiding, consigning, or relegating responsibility. It is a commitment "to take some moral or intellectual position or

course of action" (Webster's, 1960, p. 457) while governed by a superior power or authority. In the context of the American Revolution, the spirit of the American Revolution was realized through "the deed of gift," which was "many deeds of war." That single, symbolic event permits Frost to generalize about sacrifice in the quest for identity.

Though "the deed of gift was many deeds of war," symbolically the acts of the American Revolution represent more than physical acts. They are willful deeds--sacrifices, conceived in love. They symbolize commitment. Specifically, they function as a symbolic conjugation, for the colonials' physical acts are married with the spirit.

The conjugation seems to transcend the immediate condition. The outright gift of love redefines "living." The promise of a Manifest Destiny appears on the horizon ("vaguely realizing westward," l. 14). Symbolically, for better or for worse, the identity of America ("Such as she was, such as she would become," l. 16) and of the American ("Such as we were," l. 12) are redefined. The union appears blessed, but the full realization is contingent upon commitment ("But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced," l. 15).

The Philosophy of the Poem

At the heart of the message is Frost's philosophy of commitment, a commitment delivered unconditionally and consciously in the form of surrender. The surrender is not a response to extrinsic exigencies of confrontation or coercion but an intrinsic response that emerges from the soul or spirit of the gift-giver. In other words, though gift-giving may be an obligatory act as a response to external forces, or a response to guilt or fear, gifts of the heart are more

meaningful because they are initiating statements. Therefore, the act of giving "ourselves outright" is not motivated by guilt or fear or other obligatory states; the surrender originates in love and is offered consciously--not as a response to the necessities of circumstance but mediated by a spiritual transcendence.

However, to transcend the limits of a mere physical state we must transcend the limits of the present identity. We must relinquish our preoccupation with our immediate needs. To survive or physically endure is not enough. We cannot maintain our separatism and realize our promise. By willfully surrendering our separatism, we risk our existence, hopeful that we may also realize the promise of something greater than what currently exists. Paradoxically, the act of surrender delivers us to salvation. The transcendence is achieved through a commitment which Frost perceives as a conjugation and which he reveals symbolically.

Clearly, as explication shows, "The Gift Outright" makes a patriotic statement about the American identity and supplants separatism with commitment. Yet the symbols permit a more universal application. They enable the rhetor to generalize about the individual pursuit of identity and the function of commitment. The universality of the experience and the expression of speculation or wish, unconstrained by time, are the bases for the poem's lasting appeal.

Frost as a Symbol

Yet these reasons in themselves are insufficient for evaluating Frost's presentation of "The Gift Outright" at the 1961 inauguration of John F. Kennedy. The message alone does not defend the appropriateness of the act, nor fully

define its significance. The occasion was, after all, a rhetorical situation, and as such, regard must be given the role of the poet as rhetor and the occasion. For one who had declared that he was "bad at politics" (Gerber, 1982, p.82), the willingness of the poet to read at a Presidential inauguration merits discussion.

More than anything else which may have contributed to the circumstance, in the twenty-two years since the first publication of The Witness Tree (Frost,1942), Frost himself had become a symbol, "a kind of American culture hero" (Nitchie, 1960, p.174). Four times, he had been the winner of a Pulitzer Prize (the fourth time for The Witness Tree), and he did not need to produce a book a year or poetry "on demand" to accomplish his feats.

By 1959 he was a recognized spokesperson for the arts, particularly for the poets. As a Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress for that year, Frost hoped to increase the voice of the poet and the power of the arts. He spent four "intervals" of one week each at the Library of Congress, gave numerous public appearances on behalf of the Library, held consultations in his assigned office and delivered lectures to paying guests in Washington, D.C. (Ciardi, 1962, p.54). During this time, he also appeared before the Education Subcommittee on Labor and Public Welfare to speak in behalf of the establishment of a National Academy of Culture for which he had been campaigning (Gruesser, 1960, p. 106).

The appearance before the subcommittee received national attention in the electronic and print media. It afforded him the opportunity to acclaim the artists for their " 'passionate preference'--for what's brought us (America) up" (Gruesser, 1960, p.106). He defended the artist and the sports figure as the source of spirit in the land, and he recognized them for their prowess and

performance. He explained that "scholars operate on what has been done, but they're not interested in the making of more." Furthermore, he had come to believe through conversation with scientists that scientists believed America's success was "more or less accident." Emphatically, Frost maintained that America's "upwardness" was the result of "passionate preference. . .in the arts more than anywhere else." He appealed to the committee, "We can't make that, you know . . .But we can bless that." Unfortunately, though his voice was heard by the largest audience which the chair, Senator Yarborough, ever recalled at such a hearing, Frost did not secure the approval for the academy.

Unmistakably, Frost's language at the hearing enlarged the meaning of his symbols in "The Gift Outright." When he acknowledged the poet and the sports figure as the source of the American spirit, he was identifying a common attribute as the redeeming element in America's salvation. He denied that the same attribute existed in the scholars and scientists. By saying the former were not interested in the promises of the Future Order and the latter could not identify the cause of America's upwardness, Frost denied them conscious role-taking in the "making" of America. Moreover, if neither scholars nor scientists could provide the gifts, neither could they grant salvation. If the poets and sports figures alone could redeem America from an "unrealizing" future, then Frost believed the government's role should bless the spirit that "makes more." Such a deed would serve to enhance that which was as yet "unenhanced."

Frost's own image as an invigorating American spirit increased. During his visits to Washington, he became acquainted with Senator Kennedy, who was campaigning for the Presidency, and with Mr. Udall, who would become Kennedy's Secretary of the Interior. The poet and the senator

endorsed each other. On the campaign trail, Kennedy closed several late-night talks quoting Frost: But I have promises to keep,/ And miles to go before I sleep. With similar regard, Frost, during a press conference on the morning of his eighty-fifth birthday, predicted the next President as being the "Puritan from Boston" (Pritchard, 1984, p. 253). The allusion afforded Kennedy an identification with the symbols of the founding American spirit, and inasmuch as Frost stood as an equivalent of America's poet laureate (Thompson, 1959), a symbol of the American spirit in the present context, Frost's endorsement transferred the spirit which he represented to Kennedy. The endorsement made headlines. The mutuality of their endorsements symbolically acted as a conjugation of poetic spirit and the body politic. What the Subcommittee would not do for the artist and, thereby, would not do for securing America's "upwardness" was being effected through Frost, a symbol of the American spirit.

At this time, the Saturday Review lauded Frost for eighty-five years of personal courage and his ability to capture the individual and national predicament in the American idiom. Toward these ends, Thompson (1959) noted how Frost stood against the "cynical belittlers of the present American scene" (p. 56). During the "latest period of national uncertainty and self-doubt," wrote Thompson, "(Frost) remained a steadfast witness-tree to that kind of traditionally guarded Yankee optimism and confidence that we have so largely lacked and needed" (p. 21). Looking to the future, Thompson concluded that Frost "suggests that even there we are morally obliged to keep earning our right to measure (America's) future in terms of her past: 'Such as she was, such as she would become' " (p. 56). Through these pronouncements, the poet was

recognized publicly as a symbol of the American identity, and his projections were given credence as those of a seer.

The Interaction of Elements in the Rhetorical Situation

A month after Kennedy's historical election and a month before the inauguration, about 150 musicians, artists, writers, theologians, scientists, and educators were delivered unprecedented invitations to attend the inaugural ceremony. Because national attention had contributed much to Frost's image and the image of the artist, Frost was given the unique honor of a participatory role. According to Lincoln Kirsten (1961), writing in The Nation, Miss Kay Halle, a distinguished social figure of Washington, D. C. , had suggested that the intellectuals be invited. According to Harvey Shapiro (1961), writing in The Sunday New York Times Magazine a week before the inauguration, the idea had originated when Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Udall met to discuss Udall's appointment to the cabinet. Whichever the case, the invitation was viewed as an acknowledgement of the arts and the American spirit which they symbolized. The inauguration, too, was perceived as symbolic: the body politic and the spirit of "Upwardness" would stand together.

Mr. Kennedy is believed to have asked Frost to compose an epideictic poem for the occasion, but Frost is supposed to have replied that "occasional poetry" was not his style (Shapiro, p. 6). Consequently, wrote Shapiro, Mr. Kennedy asked Frost to read "The Gift Outright." However, two months later, in The Sunday New York Times Magazine, Mr. Udall (1961) reports that the choice was Frost's, that Frost "informed the new President he would read his 'most national poem' " (p. 13).

The difference seems arbitrary and insignificant in light of the nature of the poem and its relationship to the event. The occasion called for epideictic rhetoric to be sure, and as epideictic orators should do, Frost would amplify his resources by appealing to the past in a way of reminiscence and to the future in a way of anticipation (Thonssen, 1942). Without question, "The Gift Outright" was fitting and proper.

Only the final phrase--"such as she would become" seemed at odds with the purpose of the occasion. At least, this was the perception of the New Administration, who solicited Frost to change it to "such as she has become" (Shapiro, 1961, p. 6). Though he had recited the line "such as she might become" (Cook, 1974, p.194) many times, evidently Frost could not accept the implication of the recommended phrase. He recast it as "such as she will become." The new verb phrase retained the sense of futurity without relinquishing responsibility; it also invested confidence in the leadership.

On the Sunday preceding the 1961 inauguration of John F. Kennedy, the popular and respected New York Times Magazine sanctified Frost's forthcoming role in the inauguration by saying the "old man's poem [would] fall on the President, the top-hatted dignitaries and the watching nation as a kind of *benediction* " (Shapiro, p. 6). Though the title of the article "Story of a Poem" was engaging for its understatement, the article created reverent images: the occasion was described as "seemly that Frost should *grace* these ceremonies" and the act was considered an "innovation in inaugural *rites*." The " '*minister* in mufti' " (as Frost was described by a close friend) was to read what the white-haired bard called his " 'most national poem'." To the readers of The Sunday New York Times Magazine, the article promised not just ceremony but a

spiritual ordination.

Frost, himself, suggested the moment promised more. He proclaimed it a point of "enhancement," such as that addressed in "The Gift Outright" (l. 15). Symbolically, the artists now became the redeemers, for, as Frost interpreted, "the arts do the enhancing." The Upwardness of America could be assured by such a commitment, for "the more poetic insight a President has, the better" (Shapiro, 1961, p. 7).

Although most of the article enabled Frost to discuss his poem "The Gift Outright," Frost also elevated the circumstance of his recitation at the inauguration when he said that "to have poetry brought into the affairs of statesmen. . .becomes an Administration, as it becomes a reign" (Shapiro, 1961, p. 7) Implying that the New Administration was like that of the greatest reign in England, he noted that Shakespeare's sonnets "had the power of the throne behind them" (Shapiro, p.7). So saying, Frost was accepting the responsibility as the nation's bard. His voice, like the classical voice of the bard, would sound prophetic. It would not merely reflect the national spirit, but "enhance" it. From Frost's perception, the role symbolically increased his power and intensified the meaning of the relationship between poetry and politics.

To secure the blessings of that relationship was evidently the goal of a second poem, a dedicatory poem which Frost penned within two days of the inauguration (Udall, 1961, p. 98). It lauded Kennedy for his courage and predicted that he would rule over a new Augustan Age--like that long, peaceful, and productive time of Augustus Caesar. The image was a symbol of the ideal society.

Though different from "The Gift Outright" in form and tone, "by striking

coincidence this new verse invoked the same lessons of history, issued the same essential message of challenge, and had the same nobility of tone as the speech the President was to deliver" (Udall, 1961, p.98). Yet the poem's concluding lines would remind the audience that the fulfillment of the ambition would be dependent upon a conjugation of poetry and power, "a golden age of poetry and power" (cited in Udall, p. 13). Entitled "Dedication: To John F. Kennedy," the poem was indeed a call for commitment, but it addressed the Administration as much as, if not more than, the general American audience.

Perhaps the difference in the nature of the poem's commitment or in its intended audience constrained Frost on the day of the inauguration. Or, as cited by Marinello (1961), perhaps Frost was hesitant about reading that which violated one of his own principles--'A poem cannot be worried into being' (p. 22). Or, perhaps, as reporters suggested, the glare of the sunlight forced the poet to the security of what was familiar ("We shall pay", 1961, p. 9). Whatever the cause, the second work, the dedicatory poem, was not delivered as intended--preceding "The Gift Outright" at the inauguration. Instead Frost recited what he had long committed to memory, addressing himself to those who celebrated their patriotism and who longed for a blessing on tomorrow. He gave to them "The Gift Outright."

Assessments of the Rhetorical Act

On the day of the Inauguration, 1961, the air was cold and the sky was overcast. Heavy snow had fallen the night before, hampering travel. At noon, the time of the inauguration, weather conditions imposed further constraints upon the festivities.

Following Cardinal Cushing's invocation and preceding the official oath-taking, the eighty-six-year-old Frost rose to give his blessings outright ("We shall pay"):

> But the bright sun blinded the old New Englander, the wind whipped the paper in his hands, and he faltered. In the front row, Jackie Kennedy snapped up her head in concern. Lyndon Johnson leaped to shade Frost's paper with his hat, but it did no good. At length, Robert Frost, proud of the fact that Jack Kennedy had invited him and 155 other writers, artists, and scientists to the Inauguration, turned boldly to the microphones and said, 'This was supposed to be a preface to a poem that I can say to you without seeing it. The poem goes this way. . .' The crowd left off its embarrassed titters over the old man's bobble and listened quietly as Frost recited from memory his finely chiseled lines. (p.9).

The recitation of "The Gift Outright" was clear and unfaltering. Only the slightest pause was heard before the word <u>will</u> in the final line.

Beyond the message of the written discourse, the presentational mode spoke for Frost. His gray hair suggested sagacity; his conversational, resonant tone invited trust. His response to Apollo's glare seemed heroic. He stood as a living symbol of the arts, endorsed by the occasion as a viable contributor to the affairs of men. His position was visibly privileged.

The privilege lent credibility to his message, and by definition of the moment, the nature of the rhetoric was newly defined. First, "The Gift Outright" was a prologue to the young President's inaugural address. It renewed a sense of heritage, and into the hands of the New Administration it committed our spirit.

Second, the implications of the title were multiplied. To some, the title symbolized a personal gift from the poet to the President: the poet was making public his commitment. To others, it suggested that the poet had offered a gift outright to the spirit of America, the audience of the moment. To others, the poem was symbolic of the artists' gift of enhancement bestowed upon the New Administration. Third, the promises of salvation seemed more assured. With the commitment to America renewed, the bard prophesied our land would not remain "unstoried, artless, unenhanced." "Such as she was" and "such as she will be" implied a parallel between the greatness of the past and the promise of the future. The occasion was a dream realized and the language pronounced it reality.

Before Kennedy enlisted his fellow Americans by saying, "Ask not what your country will do for you--ask what you can do for your country," Robert Frost had reminded the audience of their heritage, of sacrifices made in behalf of their freedom, and of the assurance of salvation when the spirit is committed. Every American accepted these images: they were established in the culture. They constituted historical reality. But the future was unrealized. Who could be trusted to lead them through the wilderness? The voice of the bard offered the answer.

Accepted as a symbol of the American culture, Frost was trusted. His sense of truth was America's truth. He understood the paradoxes. He recognized the need. Consequently, the template of self which was offered in "The Gift Outright" was trusted, too, and the consciousness of his deed was inspiring.

Unquestionably the occasion had special significance for Frost. Just the

Sunday before, Shapiro (1961) had quoted Frost as saying, "I may not be equal to [a role in the inauguration] but I can accept it for my cause the arts, poetry, now for the first time taken into the affairs of statesmen" (p. 6). For another cause, too, Frost had accepted the role: the occasion appeared to carry personal implications. In the same interview Frost had said, "[My role] would have pleased inordinantly the kind of Grover Cleveland Democrats I had for parents. . ." (p. 7). His participation before millions of television viewers and members of the radio audience expressed his commitment to the New Administration, a Democratic administration. His deed of gift was his deed of tribute. The act married his role as poet and his role as a political entity; he surrendered that of himself which he had been withholding. Committed to the cause, he appeared symbolically to be joined with the Present Order, "realizing westward," not the frontiers of the 1700's beyond the Alleghenies, but the "New Frontiers" which the Kennedy Administration was defining. In Frost's own words, "I have been a rather unhappy Democrat since 1896. But I am a Democrat. I am coming home" (p. 7). Symbolically, Frost surrendered and in that blessed, active state, found a long-desired salvation.

Conclusion

Rhetorically, the poem and the poet effected support for the New Administration by creating a sense of community among the audience and by pointing the direction for members of that community. However, the language of the poem as it was initially defined had not accomplished this. The ethos of the rhetor and his symbolic role as America's bard, having developed significantly with the endorsement of government, gave strength to the message. The

significance of the occasion, too, had redefined the language.

Once Frost had said that through all his verse he hoped to offer "a momentary stay against confusion" (Gerber, 1982, p. 111). In the case of "The Gift Outright," he offered more. Beyond his definition of literature--"words that have become deeds" (Gerber, p.111), Frost transformed his poetic expression into rhetoric. In his own terms, he gave himself outright. He transformed his words by his deeds. His verse and his application of it argue for the strength of metaphor and symbol. By his example, "they appear less as ornaments and artifices and more. . .as a 'living instrument of a lively speech' " (Cook, 1974, p. 234).

CHAPTER THREE

THE RHETORIC OF MAYA ANGELOU AS AN INAUGURAL POET

"On the Pulse of Morning" by Maya Angelou (1993a; 1993b; 1993c) is a free-verse poem composed at the request of William Jefferson Clinton for his inauguration as America's forty-second President and delivered orally for that occasion on January 20, 1993. The work functioned symbolically in the context of an inauguration that was "as calculatedly, as intentionally weighted with symbols" as any in American history (CBS News, 1993b).

To Philip Brooks of the National Archives (CBS News, 1993b), "[The] symbolism of the inauguration was incredible." To Tom Shales of the Washington Post (1993), it was "excessive beyond our wildest dread" (p. B6). Indeed Charles Kuralt of CBS was pressed to think of any symbols which the inaugural committee may have overlooked (CBS News, 1993b).

Within this context, Angelou's poem and she as its agent stood relatively unchallenged by the Press for capturing the drama of the occasion and the essence of its message. To recognize the rhetorical nature of this work and of the performance of the verse by the poet, herself, warrants (a) an explication of the poem, (b) a review of the poet's philosophy, (c) an acknowledgement of resources, (d) an interpretation of the symbolism in the poem and the poet as symbol, and (e) an assessment of the rhetorical act in the context of the inaugural situation.

Explication of the Poem

In the breadth of 106 lines, grouped in 12 irregular stanzas, the poet

Angelou admonishes injustices of the past, proffers recovery of the spirit, and stimulates hope for change. Specifically, her purpose is to convince the audience that traditions which have enslaved them can be challenged; that the darkness need not continue if the American people will look toward change, turn to each other with hope, and begin a dialogue.

Her style in this piece is the dramatic monologue: each of three archetypal voices calls for human renewal. The mythical symbols of Rock, River, and Tree respectively articulate a need to change, describe the scope of the problem and review the rights of passage. Collectively, the voices offer the means to a solution; from a consciousness of God's grace granted to humankind, and from courage drawn subsequent to that consciousness, a global community may begin a dialogue for change.

The free verse form begins in the first stanza with the images of "A Rock, A River, A Tree" (l. 1) surviving the extinction of the dinosaurs, "long since departed" (l. 2). The survival of Rock, River and Tree suggests a fundamental similarity, an unnamed, indistinguishable attribute of survival. The reference to evidence of the dinosaur's "sojourn" (ll. 4-5) suggests unconscious acts and temporal existence. Contrasted to the survival of the trinity, termed the "Hosts" (l. 2), the image of the dinosaur reminds the audience of the contrast between the eternal and temporal. Still, to those who now inhabit the planet, the cause of the phenomenal change is unknown, "lost in the gloom of dust and ages" (l. 8).

The use of the rhetorical first person plural in the first 8 lines of the poem suggests that the narrator and audience are members of a global audience, as described in the first stanza, cohabiting "On our planet floor" (l. 6). They exist as species of the Present Order, implicitly a species perceiving itself sovereign in

this world. Inasmuch as the voice of this first narrator recounts a scientific fact, recognizable to the audience--the age of the dinosaur has passed, the narrator speaks truthfully. As much as the narrator establishes that "A Rock, A River, and A Tree" (l. 1) endure, the narrator understandably speaks figuratively. Poetic license accords the trinity a verisimilar existence in the Present Order.

Following the rhetorical persona of the first person plural in the first 8 lines of the poem, the persona of the narrator transforms. The narrator speaks as the separate voices of the trinity, each presenting a dramatic monologue in turn. Beginning in the second stanza and continuing throughout the remainder of the poem, the voices of mythical, preternatural symbols--the Rock, the River, and the Tree--appeal to "us," a real audience. With direct appeal to "a true yearning to respond" (l. 41), the personifications of the Rock, the River, and the Tree engage imaginations. The audience is reminded anew of universal desires, namely to "face (our) distant destiny" (l. 11), to be relieved of "thrusting perpetually under siege" (l. 28), and to "study war no more" (l. 33). Though expressed by mythical personae, the need appeals to traditional values. To such extent, the mythical personae appear trustworthy.

An implication of need among members of the audience is inherent in a line of argument introduced in the first monologue. The dramatic voice of the Rock identifies the audience as a class of beings "only a little lower than the angels" (l. 14). The voice "cries out to (the audience) clearly, forcefully" (l. 9), saying "You. . .have crouched too long in/ The bruising darkness. Have lain too long/ Face down in ignorance" (ll. 15-18). Certainly the class nearest the heavenly order is undeserving of a fearful, abusive condition like that experienced by a beaten animal; and equally undeserving of a condition which

also perpetuates ignorance. The need to alter the condition is imminent. The Rock cries out "today" (l. 9); in the past the only response from those oppressed has come from "mouths spilling words/Armed for slaughter" (ll. 19-20).

Reinforcing these images of cowardice, ignorance and anger, additional long-term effects of abuse are recounted throughout the poem. In stanza 5, the River condemns economic wars and their by-product, pollution (ll. 29-31). In stanza 8, the effects of a tradition of abandonment and disregard for the spirit of minorities resound from the voice of the Tree (ll. 56-65). A movement toward hopeless resignation ensues but is relieved by recollections of a better era and the potential for restoring that order.

In the fifth stanza, the sense of hopelessness is challenged by an interceding reminder of a time "when [the River] and the/ Tree and the Rock were one" (ll. 35-36), "before cynicism was a bloody sear across [the human]/ Brow and when [humankind] yet knew [it] still knew nothing" (ll. 37-39). In the sixth and seventh stanzas, diverse peoples all hear the same call. Though culturally distinguishable by race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, affluence and education (ll. 43-48), each subculture utters the same desire (l. 41), acknowledging an inner voice, "a true yearning to respond to/ The singing River and the wise Rock" (l. 42). Implied in the term "true yearning" is the righteousness of the desire. After all, these groups are endowed with what appears to be a universal intrinsic characteristic. They comprise a body of people "created only a little lower than the angels" (l. 14). Moreover, mythical archetypes, presumably spokespersons of the Creator inasmuch as they are entrusted with the Creator's original Word in song (ll. 34-36), proffer the song in exchange for a commitment to peace (ll. 33-35). Implicitly, hope is sanctioned

by the Creator.

The shift to a different voice, which begins in stanza 6 and continues through stanza 7 (ll. 41-50; 51-52) intensifies the shift from problem to solution and argues for objectivity in viewing the desire to change. Speaking neither as the first narrator nor within the frame of either of the first two monologues, this narrator uses the third person plural. This perspective objectifies a desire to change. The present tense verbs in stanza 6 make the desire immanent. Finally, the repetition of "They hear. . .They all hear. . .They hear. . ." calls attention to the present state of consciousness and invites imitation on a broader scale when the Tree speaks "to humankind" (l. 52).

The last of the monologues begins in stanza 7 and moves to stanza 8 where the Tree mitigates the "wrenching pain" (l. 73) of history. First, the Tree suggests that each one's heritage is alike: indebted to the venture of an ancestor, each of us is a "descendant of some passed/ On traveler" (ll. 54-55). Such language is reminiscent of the "sojourn" of the dinosaur and fosters close association with a reminder of a temporal life. In addition, allusions remind the audience that experiences of oppression, displacement, and servitude were pervasive in our nation's history, e.g. the Trail of Tears and displacement of the Native American due to the Western gold rush (ll. 59-61), and the displacement and servitude of African blacks when Western cultures exploited mines in western Africa (ll. 63-65; 70-71) then transferred systems of servitude to America. Such examples imply that suffering is not to be particularized. Thirdly, the voice of the Tree employs American colloquialisms suggesting that obligations have been satisfied. Reminiscent of familiar expressions such as "You have arrived" and "Your dues have been paid," the Tree says, "Each of

you. . .has been paid for" (ll. 54-55) and ". . .your passages have been paid" (l. 70). More than just an allusion to the servitude of blacks, the expressions also embrace the images of indentured servants from the European continent. Collectively, these images of social injustice are recast as rites of passage. History serves only as proof that the rites of passage have been completed.

The message is not to redress the pain of the injustices. As the Tree argues, "History, despite its wrenching pain,/ Cannot be unlived, but if faced/ With courage, need not be lived again" (ll. 73-75). Just as the Rock called the audience to confront its destiny and to "seek no haven in [its] shadow" (ll. 11-12), the Tree argues for transcending constraints of the Present Order "with courage" (l. 75) and committing the spirit to the doctrine for eternal life.

The source of transcendence appears twofold. First, as argued above, courage arises from the knowledge that history serves only as proof that the rites of passage have been paid. Second, a new direction arises from trust in the eternal spirit. If the trinity of "I, the Rock, I, the River, I, the Tree" (l. 69), originally three "Hosts" (ll. 1-2), become unified--incarnate--in the "I [who] am yours" (l.70), then the trinity may be seen as the Trinity, which offers rebirth to humankind. Similarly, in likeness to the symbolism of religious myth, "root[ing] yourselves beside" (l. 66) the Tree of Life may be seen as accepting grace as an investiture of eternal life, for symbolically the Tree has endured. The command to "root yourselves" is not unlike a commandment for personal commitment to the sovereign Spirit. Thus, possessing the courage to act, as well as possessing the grace of God, means freeing the spirit and investing it with a voice.

The dream has been for self-actualization, to respond to the true

yearning (l. 41). In stanzas 8 and 9 the narrator finally urges that response. The mood of the verb becomes imperative. Rhythmically, the narrator exhorts the audience to "Lift up. . .faces" (l. 71), "Lift up. . .eyes" (l. 76), "Lift up. . .hearts" (l. 78). The effect is compelling. However, not until stanza 9, does the narrator exhort the audience to "give birth again/ To the dream" (ll. 78-79).

In the tradition of the myth, a new day brings a renewal of spirit. The promise of renewal concludes stanza 8: Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need/ For this bright morning dawning for you (ll. 71-72). A new day can also symbolize the spirit of rebirth, expressed in stanza 9: Lift up your eyes upon/ The day breaking for you./ Give birth again/ To the dream.

Contrasts in the poem's references to time and space heighten the difference between the past and the future and between the temporal and the eternal. These contrasts intensify the need to "give birth again to the dream" (l. 78-79). For example, "long since departed" (l. 2) is contrasted with "but today" (l. 9), and "face your distant destiny" (l. 11) is contrasted with "crouched too long in/ The bruising darkness" (ll. 15-16). In addition, the present condition of cynicism is contrasted with a biblical allusion to Genesis, a time when the spirit of God entertained an innocent human race (ll. 37-39). Again and again, an urgency to act is expressed: "The Rock cries out to us today" (l. 21); "yet today I call you" (l. 32); "for this bright morning dawning for you" (l. 77). Finally, renewal is intimated in the conclusion: No less to you now than to the mastodon then (l. 98).

Symbolically, the dream is taken into the hands, molded, shaped and sculpted (ll. 81-83). Like a work of art, the dreamers are urged to shape their dream to suit their "most private need" (l. 82) while giving it the image of their

"most public self" (l. 84). Then, more likened to the image of a parent reaching to encourage a child's first steps, "the horizon leans forward,/ Offering space to place new steps of change" (l. 92). The dream has been born though the potential is not yet realized.

To those who detect the "pulse of this fine/new day" (l. 93/99), the occasion appears to give life to the dream. The pulse is indicative of the spirit of the country personified. It is a real presence felt on the occasion of each inauguration when the people gather together in the spirit of the day. That pulse is suggested in the repetition of aural rhythm and the substitution of "your sister's eyes and. . .your brother's face" (ll. 101-102) for "me, the/ Rock, the River, the Tree" (ll. 95-96). Clinton, himself, (CBS News, 1993a) referred to the "pulse of the people, the sense of the moment" as the inspiration for his speech which helped him finish it twenty-four hours before the inauguration. No less to the American audience than to Clinton, the promise and the energy of a Presidential inauguration is indisputable.

In stanzas 11 and 12, the verb is no longer imperative; the use of the word <u>may</u> (ll. 94; 100) implies an expectation, desire or some degree of likelihood (Webster's, 1960, p. 704) relative to the possession of courage (l. 94) and grace (l. 100). Both courage and grace appear prerequisite "to look[ing] up and out" (ll. 95; 100).

Both expressions, reminiscent of American colloquialisms "looking up" and "looking out," are expressions for hope and anticipation. First, the narrator suggests that by looking "*upon* [italics added] the. . .country" the audience <u>may</u> have the courage to recognize diverse riches in a land unaffected by time (ll. 95-96). Second, the narrator suggests that by looking "*into* [italics added]"

the eyes of its brotherhood and sisterhood (l. 101), the audience may have the spirit to actualize an opportunity for honest, forthright communication. The rhetorical end of the poem, the desired result, provides an image of family unity and promises a wealth inherent in interpersonal communication.

The vocabulary of the last four lines is unsophisticated; the lines, brief; the sounds, soft. The narrator says, ". . .simply,/ Very simply,/ With hope,/ Good morning" (ll. 103-106). The invitation seems so simple. The audience may reason that a response cannot be difficult.

Throughout the work, rhetorical properties of verbal and nonverbal communication are significant. Initially, the audience is characterized in nonverbal terms and is described as using speech as a weapon (ll. 19-20). The desire of diverse groups to respond to calls for change is acknowledged, but as separate voices (ll. 41-50), no change is effected. Until they set aside their special interests and see themselves as members of one family--as brothers and sisters, they may not be able to address the problems.

The Rock, the River, and the Tree symbolically join to speak as one voice (ll. 69-70) and invite the audience's members, presumably originating from the same spirit, to join them. The call is to act courageously and hopefully, to act constructively as well, not focusing upon undoing what has been done, but upon creating new beginnings through oral communication to meet present needs and desires. They may begin "simply," once they recognize their common attribute, a God-given spirit (ll. 101-106).

The hope is for a new day--a day without the sounds of cynicism. Speaking in unison, those who yearn may "say simply" (l. 104) that they accept the conditions and "with hope" (l. 105) welcome the opportunity for change.

There are no concrete promises nor specific agenda.

Inasmuch as compassion may be inferred from the term "yearning" (l. 41), reinforced ethically as a "true" (l. 41) feeling; and inasmuch as the response is envisioned as an oral exchange ("to respond to the singing River . . .So say the Asian, the Hispanic," etc. , ll. 43-48) and as an act of composure (suggested by the soft alliterative properties in "So say. . ." as opposed to the Rock's "cries," l. 9 and l. 21, and the River's melancholy, "beautiful song," l. 24), the intended response may be presumed respectable.

As the distinct subcultures (ll. 43-48) in stanza 6 are renamed "they" (ll. 49-51), the separateness of multiple identities is lost. The imagery transcends differences which might divide the audience if addressed separately or if addressed through archetypes unique to the various subcultures in the audience. Instead each voice addresses universal cultural traditions through universal archetypes. The image of unity is strengthened as "they" function as one body from stanza 8 through stanza 12.

Sentence structure contributes to the strength of the collective voice. The inverted sentence structures (ll. 41-49) shift to subject-first structures (l. 49) and are reinforced through repetition (l. 51). In addition, the verbs shift from state of being (l. 41) to action, expressed by the verbs say and hear (l. 49 and l. 51). Consequently, the cultures are recast from distinct positions of interest, relatively ineffectual though affirmative in their voices, into a single audience, hearing one message intended for all "humankind" (l. 52).

Together imagery and syntax offer a communication model for the audience to follow. First, each voice vocalizes ("cries," l. 9; "sings," l. 24; "speak[s]," l. 52) a negative condition affecting the audience's present attitude.

Then each invites the audience to transcend such circumstance by establishing social interaction, free of cynicism, with the speaker. At each stage of the address, a new speaker joins with the preceding voice[s], until all are rooted in one place and promise not to waver in their commitment. Thus the model suggested by imagery and syntax implies a transfer of power existing under the former conditions to a rededicated, unified body.

Angelou's Philosophy: Her Personal Sense of Truth and Its Relationship to Reality

Though the expression "Good morning" seems simple and the transcendence suggested by the text seems feasible, the portrayal of historical struggles is highly dramatic. So are the rites of passage. The drama is intentional. The experiences themselves are not unlike those in Angelou's life, and the dramatic persona, not unlike that which has allowed her to speak synedochically for all black Americans.

Her experiences have been the experiences of young, black girls in the Deep South realizing both racial prejudice and the source of courage necessary to transcend oppression (Angelou, 1970). Her experiences have been the experiences of black, single, unwed mothers trying desperately to make a living and to raise a child while exploiting and being exploited (Angelou, 1974; Braxton, 1991, p. 4). Her experiences have been the experiences of the Afro-American looking for roots in Africa and discovering that "you never leave home" (Angelou, 1991; Gruesser, 1990, p. 8; Oprah Productions, 1993). Her experiences have been the experiences of the blacks in the civil rights movement and women in the women's movement, coming of

age (Angelou, 1981; Neubauer, 1983, pp. 125-129). By her intention, through each autobiographical volume, her personal experiences became symbols, fictionalized so they might be transformed from personal truths to a verisimilitude of the black experience (Braxton, 1991, p. 7; Tate, 1983, pp. 2-3; Neubauer, 1983, p. 127).

Repeatedly in her autobiographical fiction, in her lectures (Angelou, 1993d), in the style of her living, Angelou "has triumphantly created and recreated the self, endowing her life story with symbolic significance and raising it to mythic proportions" (Braxton, 1991, p. 1). Yet she entrusts not only the survival of her race but its inspiration to the black poetic genre (Angelou, 1970):

> Oh, Black known and unknown poets, how often have your auctioned pains sustained us? Who will compute the lonely nights made less lonely by your songs, or the empty pots made less tragic by your tales?
>
> If we were a people much given to revealing secrets, we might raise moments and sacrifice to the memories of our poets, but slavery cured us of that weakness. It may be enough, however, to have said that we survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets (include preachers, musicians, and blues singers).
>
> (p. 180).

In agreement with these perspectives, "On the Pulse of Morning" not only appears to reiterate her message about self-realization but also to incorporate elements of the genre which she believes is inspirational to her people.

According to her admission (Tate, 1983), she has made each experience in all her writing appear as a "poetic adventure" (p. 5), as a

symbolic experience. Though each may act as a synecdoche of the black experience, Angelou envisions them as representative of humankind (Chou-Eoan & Burleigh, 1993):

> What I do is speak to the black experience, that's what I know. But I'm always talking about the human condition. I use what I know to say this is how we are. This is how human beings are. This is how we can overcome. This is what can make us laugh (p. 62).

The facts in everybody's life may be different, says Angelou, but the "truth" is the same (Graham, 1991, p. 407). "In all my work, what I try to say is that as human beings we are more alike than we are unalike" (Manegold, 1993, p. C8). Angelou believes that being able to show this in her work, being able to draw the similarities of one group alongside another and articulate the "truth" in their existence, may be the reason Mr. Clinton asked her to write the inaugural poem (Manegold, 1993, p. C8).

Angelou's extension of "truth" beyond the black experience is suggested through two avenues in the text "On the Pulse of Morning." First, stanza 6 delineates subcultures differing in race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, affluence and education--including blacks among the numbers but not distinguishing them from others in their desire nor even suggesting that one group's desire is paramount to that of the others. Second, in stanza 8, American subcultures--enumerated as Native Americans (ll. 57-58) and immigrant populations from Europe, western Asia and far north of America (l. 62)--are identified as "descendants of some passed/ On traveler" (ll. 54-55) just as western Africans and indentured servants are identified. In apposition to the "you" addressed throughout the poem, these groups suggest a set greater

in membership than the black culture but inclusive of it. The groups enumerated in the text appear to function synecdochically for all disenfranchised peoples in the melting pot. Therefore, the redefinition of self envisioned by Angelou appears applicable to all implicated in the terms of address.

Sources of the Literary Persona and Imagery in "On the Pulse of Morning"

Angelou heightens the drama in each "truthful" experience of her autobiographical work and frequently her poetry through the voice of the narrator. Her admiration of Frederick Douglass' ability to speak for the collective black experience led her to work with the technique of the slave narrative: to speak in the first person singular but convey a sense of the plural (Neubauer, 1987, p. 286). The voices of her narrators sound powerful, but each is locked in its own character's perspective of a first-person experience (Braxton, 1991, p. 2). As her poetry demonstrates (Ramsey, 1984-85, p. 142), this persona often speaks to an audience collectively, adding the dynamic of drama's present tense. Its effects are evident in the explication of the inaugural poem.

What is not evident in the explication, however, is the significance of the relationship between popular black literature and Angelou's text. Most influential are the works of the black scholar W. E. B. Du Bois and the poet James Weldon Johnson, as well as the lyrics of black spirituals.

From close readings of Du Bois, Angelou draws substance and lyricism. For example, in response to W. E. B. Du Bois' argument of the "double

consciousness" (Hill-Lupin, 1991, p. 183), which she came to understand while in contact with him in Africa (Angelou, 1991, p. 23), she has developed an approach to meeting the black culture's need for self-esteem. She incorporates this in the theme of "On the Pulse of Morning." From the titles of his well-known works Dusk of Dawn (Du Bois, 1986) and "Of the Dawn of Freedom" (Du Bois, 1986) may have come the image of morning as it appears in Angelou's poem. Certainly the following, taken from the Apology in Dusk of Dawn (Du Bois, 1986), presents some possible sources (indicated in boldface) of her imagery:

> I have essayed in a half century three sets of thought centering around the hurts and hesitancies that hem the black man in America. The first of these, "The Souls of Black Folk,". . .was a **cry** at **midnight thick within the veil**, when **none rightly knew** the **coming day**. The second, "Darkwater", . . .was an exposition and **militant challenge**, defiant with dogged **hope**. This the third book started to record dimly but **consciously** that **subtle sense of coming day** which one feels **early morning** even when mist and murk hang low (p. 551).

In addition, "On the Pulse of Morning" is reminiscent of James Weldon Johnson's, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a song familiar to most black children in the Deep South of Angelou's youth (Angelou, 1970, p. 179) and the song considered by many blacks to be their national anthem (Angelou, 1970, p. 178; Shuker, 1990, p. 35). The influences of substance and language (highlighted in boldface) are apparent (Johnson, 1963):

> **Lift** ev'ry **voice** and **sing**
> Till earth and heaven ring
> Ring with the harmonies of Liberty (**imagery**)
>
> Stony the road we trod

Bitter the chastening rod
Felt in the days **when hope, unborn, had died**.
Yet with a steady beat
Have not our weary **feet**
Come to the place for which our father sighed?

We **have come over a way that with tears has been watered**,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the **slaughtered**.
Out from the **gloomy** past (**imagery**)
Till now we stand at last
Where the white **gleam** of our **bright star** is cast (p. 101-102).

Finally, the symbols of the black spirituals suggest sources of imagery. The symbols of rock, river, and tree, Angelou, herself, publicly credited to spirituals (Angelou, 1993a; Oprah Productions, 1993): the rock from "No Hiding Place Down Here"; the river, from "Deep River, My Soul Is Over Jordan" and "Down by the Riverside"; and the tree, from "I Shall Not Be Moved". No doubt, the conclusion of "On the Pulse of Morning" may also have come from these and other spirituals, for "always in the black spirituals there's that promise that things are going to be better, by and by" (Shuker, 1990, p. 19).

Significance of the Poem's Symbolism and of the Poet as Symbol

By drawing from these familiar sources of the black experience, Angelou ennobled them before the general audience and particularized her message for the black population. In the context of the inauguration, these choices redefined elements of the black experience for the general public and redefined the meaning of the inauguration for the black population. Yet the power of the

archetypal symbols of rock, river, and tree reach beyond the emblematic significance of the elements in the black experience; the power of myth is pervasive and as old as myth itself.

According to established scholar Mircea Eliade (1968), whose language and images are echoed in Angelou's poem, myths do not ensure success, but they capture the relationships between the world and man and instruct man in his experiences:

> Myth, in itself, is not a guarantee of 'goodness' or morality. Its function is to reveal models, and in doing so, to give meaning to the World and to human life. It is through myth. . .that the ideas of *reality, value, transcendence* [sic] slowly dawn. Through myth, . . .the World can be apprehended. In telling how things were made, myth reveals by whom and why they were made and under what circumstances. All these 'revelations' involve man more or less directly, for they make up a Sacred History (pp. 144-145).

Recognizing that "every significant cosmic object has a 'history'," says Eliade is "as much to say that it can 'speak' to man" (p. 142). Furthermore, "if the world speaks to him through its heavenly bodies, its plants and animals, its rivers and rocks, . . .man answers it by his dreams and his imaginative life. . .by his ability to die and return to life ritually in initiation ceremonies, by the power to incarnate a spirit by putting on a mask" (p. 143). Presumably, to the disciple of such myth, not only animals can communicate with humankind, "but also the rock or the tree or the river. Each has its 'history to tell. . . , advice to give' " (p. 143).

With Angelou's appropriation of the three archetypal symbols of the spirituals, she invokes images of what are perceived as "fixed and enduring in

the universal flux" (Eliade, 1968, p. 140). They are not temporal; they represent the preternatural and are held sacred. Their messages are likewise sacred.

In keeping with the tradition of the myth, what is perceived as "reality" is not necessarily locked in the absolutes of time, not in "realities" of oppression. Humankind may free itself, may transcend the Present Order if the sacred order of an earlier time is recovered. For example, in the universal order of the poem, the sacred order is a time before servitude and before the evils of oppression entered the world, or in a more immediate context, the sacred order means a time when the Democrat party governed from the White House.

Angelou's poem not only recounts the fundamental stages of the rites of renewal, it explicitly names the agencies of reconstruction--courage and grace--and addresses the audience directly as agents of change. The voices of the Rock, the River and the Tree exhort participation from an audience who profess interest in that renewal by virtue of their presence. Endowed with supernatural powers which allow them to transcend the constraints of time, the personifications of the Rock, the River, and the Tree promise a kind of renewal, analogous to that idealized in the occasion of the inauguration. The ethos of each speaker is further enhanced by the merit of their subjects: an earlier, egalitarian state of the society and the need to satisfy a commonly shared, "true yearning." When the deities become unified as One Spirit and invested in the audience, the channels focus more sharply on the agencies of change governed by each member of the audience. The appeal becomes more urgent.

The dramatization of the ritual by the poet, herself, created the dynamic which made the poetic experience a fitting response to the rhetorical situation. Notably a seeker of her own identity as a woman and a black, Angelou stood as

a synecdoche for her audience. Her presence, replete with a conscious dramatization of courage and grace (Oprah Productions, 1993), argued for the agencies defined in her verse. After all, she was participating in the rites of renewal as the archetypal Trinity incarnate. The role had been sanctified by the invitation of the President. Her presence on the platform spoke rhetorically of inclusion, of recovered status, of a rebirth of the black culture and of a nonsexist society.

As an enactment of Clinton's policy and a response to the exigencies of the inauguration, she stood as a symbol of change. The poem and its enactment spoke most "truly" of the black experience. Yet by her association of blacks with other minorities in common experiences defined within the text and by allusion to Genesis and invocation of Christian doctrine inherent in the images of the Trinity, Angelou offered substantial argument for a broader recognition of the "truth" in the message.

Exigencies Affecting the Situation of the Inauguration

Theoretically, the inclusion of poetry in the inaugural ceremony seems a fitting complement to the traditional rhetorical response of the inaugural situation. Traditionally viewed as distinct in form and style, rhetoric is popularly viewed as logical while the poetic is recognized as expressive and emotive (Frye, 1967, p. 337). Therefore, poetry may be seen as a complement to reason and a means to bridge the gap between the emotional and the logical (Frye, p. 337). Reasoning from the opposing natures of these modes of expression and from the example of the Kennedy inaugural thirty-two years earlier, the Clinton inaugural committee appeared to have concluded that poetry might

serve as a fitting response to the popular demand for a new generation's leadership, of which Clinton's election was an endorsement.

Clinton's frequent emulation of Kennedy many times during the course of the campaign and Clinton's appropriation of the symbols of Camelot as fitting for a new generation in the Nineties ("Profile: Caged Bird," 1993, p. 98; "Two Speeches," 1993, p. 4) may have provided the initial prompt for Angelou to function as Frost did in presenting "The Gift Outright" (Molotsky, 1992, p. L8). However, Frost was the equivalent of the nation's poet laureate at the time he spoke; Angelou was not. Still Kennedy and Frost were from the same northeast region of the country, and Clinton and Angelou both herald from the same economically depressed state of Arkansas. In itself that does not defend Clinton's choice of Angelou in preference to the nation's poet laureate Mona Van Duyn ("Poetic Justice," 1993, p. 34). Other factors defend Clinton's selection of Angelou more directly. Their professed faith in God, their public proclamation of their faith, and their "practical vision of how to use their own resources" ("Profile: Caged Bird," p. 98) may have made the persona of Maya Angelou more fitting than Von Duyn, considering the intended appeal to the audience and the tone which Clinton sought for the occasion.

Relevant also to theory, any response should suit the needs of the audience and the occasion. Answering a need for redefinition of the status of minorities and marshalling a tone for the forthcoming term of office, the Clinton inaugural committee sought symbols which were intended to appeal to a diverse population, to recognize American themes of inclusiveness, responsibility, and renewal ("Changing of the Guard," 1993, p. 165), and to communicate immediately an enthusiasm to address the nation's problems

anew. After all, Clinton's election had depended on populist appeal (Hitchens, 1993, p. 186) and according to William Leuchtenberg (CBS News, 1993b), professor of American history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "for the most part, those Presidents who have been effective have set the tone of their administration at the inauguration."

To satisfy those ends, the symbols of Clinton's inaugural celebration were rooted substantially in the American pop culture and in minority cultures. As examples of the New Administration's commitment to the American pop culture, fifty faces of freedom, people chosen from the common walks of life along the campaign trail, were feted at an inaugural luncheon termed the "Faces of Hope" luncheon ("Blacks Play," 1993, p. 12; Miller, 1993, p. 23); and a wall of hope, entitled "The American Town Hall Wall", inviting handwritten messages from the populace attending the inauguration, served as an agency for direct, personal communication with the White House (Hamburger, 1993, p. 78). As examples to the black culture, Clinton delivered an epideictic speech at a black university on the Martin Luther King holiday, and he became the first President to attend the traditional inaugural church service at a black church ("Black America's Biggest," 1993, p. 119). Even the entertainment--the largest and most lavish of any American performance (Mundy & Hochman, 1993, p. 32)--appeared to be "a musical melting pot," where black entertainers figured prominently ("Blacks Play," 1993, p. 17). Most effectively, the spectacle delivered a mood and concrete symbols with unexcelled intensity.

The plethora of symbols and the effort to reduce their levels of abstraction were expected to revivify the inauguration for the populace. Even the title of the whole affair, "An American Reunion" ("Black America's Biggest," 1993, p. 116)

connoted an extended family celebration renewing their relationships although the promise of a "part Woodstock, part Hollywood" gala suggested a renewal of a different order for some (Miller, 1993, p. 23). Metaphorically for America's subcultures, participation in the rites of the inauguration spoke as participation in rites of rebirth and renewal. The extensive coverage of the media and the appeal of popular and minority symbols "[gave] people something to touch and [the occasion to] say, 'I see it'" (Mundy & Hochman, 1993, p. 32). By contrast with previous inaugurations, Clinton's inauguration spelled change.

The symbolism was appropriate to a political style appealing to the Baby Boomers and becoming the standard on the American scene. Today's speeches are not moving epistles written in the style of classical orators; nor are today's speeches published as collections and devoured as bestsellers, such as the times before Franklin Roosevelt (Sobran, 1993, p. 37). Today's speeches are intended for the immediate effect commonly generated by a commercial (Jamieson, 1988, p. 115-117; Sobran, 1993, p. 37).

The employment of the televised media as a popular public medium for broadcasting information about the inauguration has elevated a nonverbal, highly visual symbol system which may contradict as well as reinforce verbal rhetoric. Its conditioning effect on the viewing public is what one critic describes as "the corollary to Andy Warhol's maxim about fame: everyone now has an attention span of about 15 seconds" (Corliss, 1993, p. 69). Because the nature of the televised media restricts much of its transmission of news to sound bites of short duration and accompanying visual clips of corresponding length, the nature of the nonverbal symbols must be unequivocal and immediately recognizable to be effective. In rhetorical terms, the situation demands a

movement from the verbally discursive mode of the past toward a more presentational mode.

This new generational, American style was the style Clinton employed during the election (Friedman, 1993, p. A14). It was also the style used by Clinton for his inauguration (Friedman, p. A14). Throughout the scene, there emanated a movie magic that studded one popular star image after another onto the screen (Corliss, 1993, p. 69). Perhaps the style was appealing because President Clinton has had difficulty generating imagery and vitality in his speeches, as evidenced by what he writes himself (Sobran, 1993, p. 37), or perhaps he preferred a style of address which is highly emotive and less formal, which has also been true of his own work (Klein, 1993, p. 30). Whether Clinton embraced the style to enhance his own or because the Kennedy brothers and Reagan have proven its merits (Hitchens, 1993, p. 186), the communication of political policy via symbolism became the standard of the occasion.

Any one of the aforementioned may have served as an exigency for the invitation to Angelou; on the other hand, a combination may justify Clinton's choice of Angelou as a fitting response to the discursive and presentational demands of the situation. The interaction of the symbols in the text with Angelou's enactment of the message reaffirmed the commitment to diversity and change which the President professed in his speech and campaign. On a broader scale, in the context of the inauguration, Angelou's poetry and her performance enhanced the drama of the inauguration and reinforced the truth of the President's rhetoric.

Published Criticism of Angelou's Poetry and Performance

Very few literary or rhetorical criticisms of "On the Pulse of Morning" have been printed. What has been published is terse and more critical than approving. At its worse, criticism says the verse "in its peak moments achieved doggerel," that "the poem earned a place in Bartlett's Familiar Quotas," and in terms of effects, that it occasioned "one of those moments everyone tries to be tactful about" (Sobran, 1993, p. 37). Another critic likened the poem to "a mishmash of T.S. Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday' and 'The Politically Correct Handbook' " ("Verse and Worse," 1993, p. 26) while still another critic dismissed the poem entirely, calling Angelou "the poet who put the quota in quotation" (O'Sullivan, 1993, p. 4). At its best, one critic said the poem "was hard to follow, but touched all the bases, affirmative-actionwise" (Sobran, 1993, p. 37). That was similar to the opinion held by one of Angelou's contemporaries, the poet laureate who had been by-passed by Clinton in favor of Angelou ("Poetic Justice," 1993, p. 34).

As for the performance of the verse, one critic said Angelou's voice "rumbled out" at "an octave lower than Clinton's" (Sobran, 1993, p. 37), another likened the utterance to a hymnal chant, and a third described it as "the sound of summer evening thunder rumbling somewhere off in the distance" (Haynes, 1993, p. 70). In marked contrast, another critic (Hitchens, 1993, p. 186) suggested that sound and substance of the verse functioned together much like an introductory jingle from Good Morning, America.

In her own words, Angelou admitted that the finished poem would be/was less than what she would have liked. Before she had finished it, she confided, "I think that the poem I'm working on, if I had six more months, I could make it into

something" (Chou-Eoan & Burleigh, 1993, p. 62). Then almost six months later, she pointedly called the poem "good" but said a few more months would have helped in "reducing" its language so "it could have been great" (Oprah Productions, 1993). Sacrificed due to time constraints were "some of the strategies and resources of poetry," namely "a certain density of imagery and a tightness of the poem--any kind of complicated imagery," said Mona Van Duyn ("Poetic justice," 1993, p. 34).

Yet the most significant criterion of the presentation by this poet-as-rhetor may not be measured in the quality of her verse nor the moment of its presentation. The evidence which spoke most dynamically was Angelou's presence on the platform. As one author remarked, "This woman could have read the side of a cereal box. Her presence was so powerful and momentous" ("Overheard," 1993, p. 23). To call that presence an indulgence of popular sentimentalism (Klein,1993, p. 30) or tokenism (Hitchens, 1993, p. 186) is to bed oneself in the politics of the event and miss the truth of the situation.

Angelou's presence communicated the unmistakable message Clinton needed to communicate. Similar to Clinton's campaign song, "Don't Stop Thinking about Tomorrow," the text was generically poetic and focused upon images associated with the dawning of a new day. However, the symbolism of the text and the medium of enactment pronounced the message rhetorical. More persuasive than the word alone, more persuasive than other genre could intimate, the word made deed was what the American people and viewers around the globe perceived as the policy of the New Administration. The New Administration meant "change."

Conclusion

According to headlines in The New York Times (Friedman, 1993, p. A14), the oath for the Presidential office was administered "Amid a Pageantry of Diversity, [with] Homage to Election Themes." Acting as poet-rhetor, Maya Angelou contributed to the pageantry and paid homage to themes of diversity. In keeping with the major task of the epideictic speaker (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 1976, p. 33) Angelou lauded the virtues of courage and grace in rites of renewal and rebirth. At the same time, she communicated in a style rhetorically effective for a new generation of Americans, employing both discursive and presentational symbols. Though the text suffered, her presence was a distinct and unequivocal symbol. More convincing than the style and substance of her verbal symbols, Angelou's own persona argued rhetorically that the country had come face-to-face with change.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE APPROPRIATENESS OF POETIC TEXT AND ENACTMENT IN THE INAUGURAL SITUATION

Exigencies and Constraints Inherent in the Presidential Inauguration

By tradition, the American inauguration is expected to unify the American people, laud the renewal of the American political system, and set the tone for the Administration's ensuing term. The occasion is envisioned as a dramatic moment of great import (CBS News, 1993b):

> You can't beat [the inauguration] for dramatic impact, especially when we remember just how unusual in history, how unique in history, how enviable this peaceful transition of power is.

If "tradition itself tends to function as a constraint upon any new response in the form" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 13), then the fitting response must recognize the substance and style traditionally defined in the dramatic form of the inauguration.

Yet each inauguration must respond to exigencies and constraints unique to the New Administration and the occasion. For example, the demands upon Kennedy were not the same as the demands upon Clinton, though some of the issues of the Kennedy scene persist today. In addition, changes in the nature of the media have imposed different constraints on the presentation of the drama since the Kennedy inauguration. To respond to the exigencies and constraints unique to each situation and to satisfy the nature of the occasion require communication that dynamically addresses a new generation's consciousness.

Of select importance may be the communication of the poet-rhetor, the focus of this criticism. The notation of similarities and distinctions between the acts of the respective communicators at the only two inaugural occasions employing poets as rhetors may illuminate the appropriateness of such a response to the exigencies of their inaugural situations. The goal is not to legislate the principles of a particular genre, a practice of critics against which Burke (1966, p. 33) and Simons (1976, p. 48) advise, given the limitations of this criticism. Of primary interest herein is the dynamic interplay of symbols which contribute to the drama of the inaugural rhetoric.

Precedence and Distinction: Frost and Angelou

An exigency similar to both Clinton and Kennedy appears to be the factor which warranted Clinton's imitation of Kennedy's inaugural scene: the need to reaffirm the Administration's commitment to a new generation and the desire to unify the American people. For Kennedy, the "subalterned symbol" of Camelot and the "synecdochic pontifex 'Ask not . . .' " constituted a change in Presidential style and a substantive message (Jamieson, 1988, p. 96). Although the issue of commitment and the role of the new generation was contained in the substance of Frost's text, the inclusion of a poet and the poetic genre for the first time on the inaugural scene redefined the dramatic conventions in the occasion . Invoking images of Kennedyesque Camelot, Clinton tried to stimulate a similar romantic association between the Administration and the populace. While the audience's belief in the recovery of Camelot cannot be quantified, the Administration's intent was clear. Not only parallels between the Presidents' rhetoric ("Two Speeches," 1993, pp. 4, 6) but

similarities in staging the scene through the act of a poet--as--rhetor prompted Baby Boomers to acknowledge the New Administration's intent to revive a bygone age.

The differences in the poets' personae signal distinguishing motives in the two rhetorical situations. Exigencies and constraints unique to the respective Administrations required distinct substance and therefore warranted different personae to serve as enactments. For example, Kennedy's appeal to the intellectual constituents in his audience warranted his invitation to Frost and the specific selection of substance in a preexisting text, "The Gift Outright" (Morison, 1964, p. 48); Clinton's appeal to the populace, and specifically black and female constituencies warranted his invitation to Angelou and to her synecdochic literary persona ("Black America's Biggest," 1993, p. 119; "Blacks Play," 1993, pp. 4, 11; Clift, 1992, p. 37). In each case the invitation conferred national status on a persona. In the case of Frost's poem, the selection either by Kennedy or Frost of text from Frost's previously published work indicates the likelihood of Kennedy's review before endorsement. In the case of Angelou, the invitation made no stipulations about text--only a reference to Frost's work as being sixteen lines, but the invitation was accompanied by a pointed request that the work be read by the poet (Oprah Productions, 1993), which suggests the significance of the dramatic component. Thereby, the Administration endorsed the image of the poet and issued a license for the style and substance of the text. Correlations between the Administration's campaign promises and the character of the poet and text were perceived as confirmations of policy. Each of the two acts served as evidence of intent. Perhaps more persuasive than verbal reiteration, the apparent transformation of the word into deed which

was communicated through enactment intimated the trustworthiness of the New Administration to honor commitments expressed in the campaign.

The texts of the two poets differ in response due to the exigencies of distinct occasions. Frost's text was not written as occasional verse though it functioned effectively as such in 1939 and 1961. The text addresses Americans as a body, functioning collectively but requiring a recovery of spirit. When adapted by the change of a single word and applied to the situation of the Kennedy inauguration, the poem offered a recovery of spirit that was suitable for New Frontiers. In contrast, Angelou's response is more situational. Angelou addresses separate factions of minority status who are spiritually enslaved by a cynicism from a history not of their own making, and she encourages them to set aside that cynicism if they are to function collectively. Though more esoteric in its appeal, Angelou's poem appeals as well to the American population at large for the implications that a "true yearning" means a desire for the inalienable right to freedom. Though differing in their specific themes, both poems call for a renewal of spirit, for recognition of common, unifying values, and for personal dedication to America's future.

Toward similar ends, both poems employ evocative symbols, symbols which their own personae dramatized. Angelou's voice characterized the voices of the Trinity and her physical presence, a synecdoche of the minority population, seemed invested with the Spirit. Frost acted as a bard, alluding to a Manifest Destiny. In each instance, the symbols of the text and the enactment by the poet proffered images that complemented the discursive properties of each President's speech. The dynamic interplay of the discursive and non-discursive modes heightened the drama of the occasion.

Changes in the Situation of the Presidential Inauguration: Media Constraints

Granted changes in future administrations' policies and the individual personalities of the leadership, the traditional character of the Presidential inauguration may incur few changes. Yet the constraints imposed by the broadcast media and the expectations of the audience who attend the broadcast may have significant impact on the rhetorical acts of future inaugurations. As Clinton (1993) noted in his 1993 inaugural address:

> When George Washington first took the oath. . . , news traveled slowly across the land by horseback and across the ocean by boat. Now, the sights and sounds of this ceremony are broadcast instantaneously to billions around the world (p. 192).

Both aural and visual symbols, attributable directly to the source, now appear as significant as verbal symbols. If the Administration delivers its message to a television audience, the Administration cannot ignore the "stylistic qualities and emotive capacity" representative of a medium which has shifted from the audiovisual segments of the 1960s to sound bites today (McCubbins, 1992, p. 2).

Subjected like an Administration's verbal rhetoric to the constraints of the television sound bite, aural and visual symbols warrant selection for their synecdoche properties (Jamieson, 1988, pp. 60, 113-117). Accordingly, an Administration may select specific issues and communicate their significance through agenda-setting impressions. Collectively, such nondiscursive symbols may communicate a scope of issues as well as assertions about those issues. If

what is seen is more memorable than what is heard and pictures are emotive, then the "staged dramatization of images that identify the politician with us and associate them with images we approve or disapprove of" (Jamieson, p. 115) can be lasting impressions which frame future Presidential acts.

For these reasons, the choice of a poet-rhetor can serve as an endorsement of particular values or assert a posture. Furthermore, if the ethos of the rhetor carries with it a reputation as a contemporary legend, then the presence of the rhetor implies the Administration's commitment to the continuity of the legendary order. By juxtaposition to the rhetoric of the Presidential address, the presence of the poet-rhetor not only may contribute pathos or "contextualize" images but also may "specify ensuing action" (Jamieson, 1988, p. 126). For example, Frost served much as a prologue to "contextualize" Kennedy's movement into the New Frontiers (Barone, 1993, p. 52), and Angelou served as an epilogue to Clinton's call for "the deepest measure of unity" to be drawn "from its myriad diversity" (Clinton, 1993, p. 193). Understandably, the more carefully coordinated, the more dynamic will be any fusion of style and substance. Through such derivation, the choice of the poet-rhetor and other nondiscursive elements, especially visual symbols, can function as artistic proofs of the New Administration's rhetoric, not limited to the language of the President's address.

The Interplay of Discursive and Nondiscursive Elements

When the artistic properties of the text or the image of the poet-rhetor fail to meet the criteria of the audience in its acknowledgement of exigencies and constraints, then the potential of the act suffers and the effects with it. In other

words, if an audience recognizes a form, then the variables of selection and arrangement must be consistent with the prescriptive form to fulfill the audience's expectations (Rod, 1986, p. 308). An audience may not be committed to a subject, but the recognition of a form may attract an audience and force "an attitude of assent," as Burke (cited in Rod, 1986) calls such collaboration. This means that the elements of any discursive or nondiscursive rhetoric within the context of the inaugural situation may be selected and arranged in accordance with the dramatic style and the purpose of the inauguration in order to elicit agreement with the Administration.

As each act within that context serves as part of a larger rhetorical context, the New Administration, acting as the producer-director of the drama, is accountable for the effects. Whenever the artistic proofs of the poet's text suffer or the persona of the poet-rhetor is in question, then the assertions of the New Administration suffer also. Both consequences are clear in the case of the Clinton Administration.

Due to constraints of time allotted for the creation of the verbal discourse, for example, the imagery of the text may suffer as did Angelou's. In the context of an inauguration wrought with other symbolic assertions about minority cultures and correlated with discursive rhetoric about a new commitment to all citizens, Angelou's free verse recitation of subcultures sounded more like weakly structured discourse than a poetic argument. Failing to resound as poetry but duplicating nondiscursive images of multiculturalism elsewhere in the inaugural drama, Angelou's discourse did not meet the audience's expectations for emotive, expressive language. Without fulfilling the prescription of the form, a unique element was restricted from dynamic interplay

with other symbols in the New Administration's rhetoric.

The dynamic interplay also suffered in terms of the poet's enactment for the Clinton theater. Failing to meet the expectations of a select number of the audience when measured against Frost as a "prescriptive form" for enactment, the reputation of the poet-rhetor abated the credibility of the Administration (Meroney, 1993):

> President Kennedy, at his inaugural, treated America to the genius of Robert Frost, whose life was one gigantic poetic achievement after another. Where JFK offered us genius, Clinton gave us a phantom professor with a broom-closet office and an assumed name. More than that, he gave us a clear message that the White House has no interest in facing the problems that are destroying our universities (p. 68).

Instead of enhancement, the dynamic interplay of discursive and nondiscursive symbols asserted the negative.

Conclusions

Limited to the examples of Robert Frost and Maya Angelou, this criticism of the rhetorical properties of the inaugural poet's persona and text may have value for its examination of the recurrent rhetorical form called enactment, but the criticism is not intended to define rhetorical enactment as a genre or to define a new inaugural genre. This criticism has argued that an enactment can provide a fitting rhetorical response to the exigencies and constraints unique to the drama of a Presidential inauguration.

From these two examples, a critic may examine similarities and differences in the agents and agencies in order to determine the extent to which

"any constellation of elements [is] bound together dynamically" (Campbell & Jamieson, 1978, p. 24), especially with respect to the recurring enactment by a poet at the Presidential inaugural and the prescriptive nature of the form in the poetic text. The comparisons and contrasts may also clarify how each element of the inaugural celebration, from an element within the microcosm of a single text to that in the macrocosm of the entire theater, can function as an extension of the New Administration.

Several conclusions emerged from this study. Reasoning from Clinton's imitation of Kennedy in the employment of poetry and poet and supported by Clinton's opening remarks, "by the words we speak and the faces we show the world, we force the spring" (Clinton, 1993, p. 192), the critic may conclude the following as the intent of the recurring act: to exhort positive, new impressions in the rites of renewal by combining spoken rhetoric with the rhetoric of enactment. In response to the constraints of the television medium, the rhetoric of the enactment should be immediately and unequivocally consonant with the ideology of the President-elect and/or the mythical nature of the inaugural occasion. Reasoning from the effects of the texts and enactments as variables in the drama of the occasion, the critic may conclude that for today's populace, the nondiscursive mode using the persona of the poet provides substantial rhetoric which may provide a longer-lasting impression of the President than does the discursive. Finally, the critic may conclude that a dynamic interplay of discursive and nondiscursive elements may provide a fitting rhetorical response to the drama of the inaugural theater.

The repetition of enactment by a poet at the American inauguration, constrained by the medium of television, suggests a call for immediacy of effect

(Jamieson, 1988, pp. 92-93), and possibly a preference for a less assertive mode, given distinctions about the functions of literary modes (Frye, 1967, p. 250). Though the drama may suggest a strong consciousness of the society for itself (Frye, p. 249), the inclusion of epos may seem either an intentional movement away from oratorical prose and inherently an intentional movement away from the substance of communication, or a conscious effort to address a greater, more diverse audience.

The possibilities of these intentions warrant further research into the employment of nondiscursive symbols in political messages. Research questions may focus upon political consultants who "[create] opportunities for recording attractive sound bites and memorable moments that in turn deliver viewers" to networks (Mickelson, 1989, p. 164); or upon political candidates who assemble impressions rather than handle arguments. Research may examine "the triumph of imagery over facts, of symbols over character, and of show business over rational arguments" (Mickelson, p. 164). Correlations and causations may be discovered among these variables and "standard[s used] to judge success and failure. . . , demands for action unintended by the rhetor. . . , [or] the foreclosure of some rhetorical options and [the opening of] others" (Jamieson, 1988, p. 98).

Because of the ethical implications relevant to the employment of nondiscursive symbols, the findings of this study reinforce a call for more careful analysis of nondiscursive symbols. A closer balance between the analysis of discursive and nondiscursive symbols may be warranted for criticisms of rhetoric appealing to contemporary audiences.

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Appendix A

Robert Frost's "The Gift Outright"

The land was ours before we were the land's.
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people. She was ours
In Massachusetts, in Virginia,
But we were England's, still colonials,
Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,
Possessed by what we now no more possessed.
Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
(The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
To the land vaguely realizing westward,
But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
Such as she was, such as she would* become.

*Read as <u>will</u> at the inauguration.

Appendix B

Maya Angelou's "On the Pulse of Morning"

A Rock, A River, A Tree
Hosts to species long since departed,
Marked the mastodon,
The dinosaur, who left dried tokens
Of their sojourn here
On our planet floor.
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,
Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow.
I will give you no hiding place down here.

You, created only a little lower than
The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness,
Have lain too long
Face down in ignorance,
Your mouths spilling words
Armed for slaughter.
The Rock cries out to us today, you may stand upon me,
But do not hide your face.

Across the wall of the world,
A River sings a beautiful song.
It says, come rest here by my side.

Each of you, a bordered country,
Delicate and strangely made proud,
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.
Your armed struggles for profit
Have left collars of waste upon
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.
Yet, today I call you to my riverside,
If you will study war no more. Come,
Clad in peace, and I will sing the songs
The Creator gave to me when I and the

Tree and the Rock were one.
Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your
Brow and when you yet knew you still
Knew nothing.
The River sang and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to
The singing River and the wise Rock,
So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew,
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek,
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh,
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,
The Privileged, the Homeless, the Teacher.
They hear. They all hear
The speaking of the Tree.

They hear the first and last of every Tree
Speak to humankind today. Come to me, here beside the River.
Plant yourself beside me, here beside the River.
Each of you, descendant of some passed
On traveler, has been paid for.
You, who gave me my first name, you,
Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me, then
Forced on bloody feet, left me to the employment of
Other seekers--desperate for gain,
Starving for gold.
You, the Turk, the Arab, the Swede, the German, the
Eskimo, the Scot,
You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru, bought,
Sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare,
Praying for a dream.
Here, root yourselves beside me.
I am the Tree planted by the River,
Which will not be moved.
I, the Rock, I, the River, I the Tree,
I am yours--your passages have been paid.
Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need
For this bright morning dawning for you.
History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes upon
The day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.

Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands.
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts.
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out and upon me, the
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.
No less to Midas than the mendicant,
No less to you now than to the mastodon then.

Here, on the pulse of this new day,
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes and into
Your brother's face, your country,
And say simply,
Very simply,
With hope,
Good morning.